

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STUDENT LOAN RATES

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, if I may respond to my dear friend from Rhode Island for whom I have the utmost respect. We have a respectful difference as far as how to approach this problem and we are working through it. We really, truly, are working and we will work through it.

We had a charge a year ago to fix it, so we started working on that. The President in a timely fashion gave us a piece of legislation that had a longer term fix, 10 years. We took that and worked off that original proposal given to us by the administration, by the President, and we started working in a bipartisan manner to make this work.

With that being said, we looked at the 3.4 percent and I would say a majority of our Senate colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, did not understand that the 3.4 percent only affected those that were subsidized loans. That is the smallest amount of loans we have out there. I think the majority of our colleagues, the majority of the people, the majority of the press thought we fixed it at 3.4 percent for everybody who had a student loan. That was not the case.

We wanted to go back and make sure if we do something we do it for everybody, because the person who has income limits and qualified for the subsidized loan, the first year they get that loan it is \$2,500; the second year it is \$3,500; the third year it is \$4,500; and the fourth year it is \$5,500. That is the maximum they can borrow. So you know what. They borrow the non-subsidized. Guess what they have been paying for the non-subsidized: 6.8. Guess what students have been paying for what we call the PLUS loans. They have been paying 7.9. But we are not hearing anything about that.

Put it in perspective as dollars. If we have a 1-year extension, as my dear colleagues have suggested, to try to fix the problem again, that will be about a \$2 billion savings of interest payments that would be put on the backs of students. That is a tremendous amount of money.

Guess what happens if we pass our bipartisan proposal. It saves \$8.8 billion, and everybody participates. Even the subsidized loan for the student who struggled the hardest and needs most of the help, they get most of the help. Not only do they get help on their subsidized loan, but they get help on their unsubsidized loan. We have looked at everything possible. We have a piece of legislation which we think not only fixes but basically repairs a broken system.

When we look at where we are today and we look at sequestering—and I have been here not quite 3 years—I have watched us kick the can down the street to where my toe is hurting. We kicked this can so much, my toe is

hurting, and it is starting to kick back.

We need to start giving the people of this great country the confidence that we can work in a functional and respectful way. Democrats, Republicans, and Independents need to come together and put our country first, put our students first, and stop playing politics.

We agreed—Democrats and Republicans—on this bipartisan bill that not \$1 should go to debt reduction. We do not believe the students trying to get an education to better and improve their quality of life, their economic condition, and the economic condition of our great country should have to be burdened with reducing the debt of this Nation. They can do that by being productive citizens. We agreed on that. That was something that was not agreed on before because there were people who wanted the surpluses to go to debt reduction.

We took out the surpluses and reduced the rate as low as humanly possible. It has been scored. We are bringing rates down. If we look at a top rate of 7.9 percent, that is going to come to 6.21 percent if they have a PLUS loan. If a student has a graduate Stafford loan, that is going to go from 6.8 percent to 5.21 percent. All the undergraduates—if it is a subsidized loan or a non-subsidized loan—will go to 3.6 percent, and that is a tremendous savings. That is the \$8.8 billion, and that is what we are asking for.

I respectfully—and I mean that—disagree with my colleagues who have signed on to a 1-year extension believing we are going to be able to come up with an agreement or a compromise that is better than what we have before us. We have worked this out with Senator CARPER from Delaware, Senator KING from Maine, myself from West Virginia, and Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee. Those are four former Governors. We knew we had to work together because we had to make things happen immediately. At the end of the year, everything had to balance out. Senator BURR and Senator COBURN also contributed, and they understand financing as well as anybody in this body.

I say to all the students who have loans right now: Don't worry. July 1 will come. We will come back on July 9 or 10, and it will be the first order of business we will ask to bring up. Both of our bills will be our first order of business.

I assure everyone that we will come up with a compromise we can work out that will give the relief the students—those who desire an education and want to better their lives will have that opportunity and be able to have stability and not have the increased rate passed on because we will make this retroactive.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COWAN). The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I don't have a great deal to add to Senator

MANCHIN's comments except to point out that everyone in this body wants to do best by our students. Everyone understands the importance of education, everyone understands how expensive it is, and everyone understands the problem of the debt burden on our students. We are all trying to search for a solution that can garner bipartisan support and pass the Senate, the House, and go to the President.

The proposal we have put forward before the body today is based upon, in many ways, the proposal made by the President in his budget. It is similar to a provision that has already passed the House. I think a couple of points should be made. One point that should be made is there is a lot of talk about a floating rate. I think people think of mortgages and adjustable rate mortgages where the rate changes from year to year.

Under our proposal, once a student takes out a loan in a given year, at whatever the rate is that year, that rate is fixed for the life of the loan. The following year, if interest rates—and we are talking about the 10-year Treasury bill of the U.S. Government, one of the lowest interest rates there is—go up, then it would go up. That is for next year's loan, not for the loan that has already been taken out.

I think we have learned from our current circumstance the folly of Congress trying to set interest rates. Setting 6.8 percent and 3.4 percent interest rates 5 or 6 years ago looked like a great deal. Today it is generating billions of dollars to the Treasury on the backs of our students.

So I think our solution is a common-sense solution, and that is to base the interest rate for the students at the lowest available rate to virtually anybody in our society, which would be the 10-year Treasury bill, plus 1.85 percent, which protects the Treasury from the costs of administering the program and the risks inherent in the program. If we do that, we will have certainty in the program and the lowest interest rate that would generally be available in this society.

If we started with a blank sheet of paper and said: We want the Federal Government to provide loans to students, I believe we would end up where this plan has ended up. It is where the President ended up, it is where the House has ended up, and I think we have an opportunity. The question is, Should we extend this for 1 year and take more time? I am new, but I stood here during the debates on the sequester, where both parties put forward their proposals, neither party got the votes, and we ended up with a sequester.

We said the exact same thing with student loans about 1 month ago. Each party put forward their proposal, neither party got their votes, and here we are just about at the deadline and the rates are going to double for those subsidized Stafford loans.

I don't know what we are going to know 1 year from now that we don't

know now. I believe the time is now to try to come to a resolution that meets everybody's requirements, and we are not that far apart. The differences separating us in this body are not that far apart. I believe we have an opportunity not only to solve this problem fairly to our students but to demonstrate to the country that we are able to make decisions and not simply delay them for another 1 or 2 years.

That is why I rise to support the bill that Senator MANCHIN and I, as well as others, including Senator BURR, Senator ALEXANDER—who I think is one of the most respected Members of this body, particularly on education matters—and Senator COBURN. We have a strong bill. I think as people see the details, understand it better, understand the terms, and understand the effects, we will save students in America over the next 3 or 4 years something like \$50 billion. If we don't resolve this problem, it will come into the Treasury on the backs of our students. I don't think that is a result we want.

I think we have a responsible proposal. It is a bipartisan one, and I believe it deserves full and fair consideration. I am sure all of these proposals will have a lot of discussion once we are back in session a week and a half from now, and I hope we can come to a resolution because the students of America deserve to know two things: that Congress has their back on student loans and that their Congress is, in fact, able to make decisions, handle issues, and move forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I see that the Senator from New York and the Senator from Colorado are on the floor. I don't know if they seek recognition. I know this has been a terrific day for them as two of the principal architects of the immigration bill we just passed. It has been a landmark achievement.

I am prepared to speak for about 15 minutes on my climate bill, so I am going to be here for a while. If the Senator from New York would prefer to proceed, then I will allow him to proceed. That will also allow me to relieve the Presiding Officer who I understand needs to go upstairs for a moment.

I will yield to Senator SCHUMER with the hope that upon the conclusion of his remarks, I will be recognized.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I wish to thank my colleague from Rhode Island. As usual, he is graceful and thoughtful as well as being an outstanding legislator with a great deal of passion. I know he wants to speak on the issue he is ready to speak about, but, again, his grace and kindness are always present and I appreciate it.

I return to the floor to just say some words of thanks. We had limited time before, so I wanted to speak to the issue. I wish to thank some people.

First I thought I would mention how much a dream this comprehensive bill has been to so many people. At the top of the list, of course, is Ted Kennedy, who was one of the greatest human beings I ever met in my life. He had the immigration subcommittee before me. This wouldn't have happened without his guidance and leadership.

Did we make changes from what he did? Obviously. But did his basic feeling, structure, and knowledge that it had to be bipartisan all carry forward on this bill? Absolutely. We know Ted is smiling as he is looking down on us today. We know he will continue to inspire not only those of us in the Senate but also the country as we move forward.

I wanted to spend a few minutes—and I very much appreciate my colleague from Rhode Island for yielding—to thank my staff. We are lucky to have the leadership of Mike Lynch, our chief of staff. We are a team, and it is an amazing team. Everyone covers each other and everyone looks out for each other.

Sometimes when I am upset and I say: Who did what, nobody did anything wrong. They are all watching each other's back. That is the lesson Lynch has taught all of them, and it is a great lesson. We are close-knit. We socialize. We have fun. They truly like each other. This certainly would not have happened without them.

Before I talk about my staff, I wish to praise each of my colleagues. I have done that repeatedly on the Gang of 8. I mentioned this outside, but I want to mention it on the floor. I can say exactly the same thing for each of the eight in the gang: It would not have happened without their presence. It was an amazing team. Each contributed something in his own way. Each contributed a great deal in his own way, and at impassable different people rose to the floor and lifted us out of those impassable. It was an amazing group.

I am not going to get into each individual right now, but I do want to thank the Gang of 8. We have bonded, we have become friends, and we have accomplished something that will hopefully carry forward and become law.

Now I wish to thank my staff. My staff, similar to all Americans, are the children or great-grandchildren or great-great-great-great-grandchildren of immigrants. They have shared their stories through this process. I know this was deeply personal for each of them. Every week just about the entire staff got together for an immigration meeting, and everybody contributed.

So I wish to take some time to thank them all. They worked so hard to fix this system. It was not only a dream of so many in this Senate, it was a dream of theirs. One thing is for sure, without them, we wouldn't be here.

In fact, I think everyone in the Gang of 8 grew to respect our staff just as we

respected their staffs. That is another great thing that happened, the bonding.

I want to mention some of the individuals. First, my chief counsel, Stephanie Martz. She poured her whole heart and soul into the bill. She has young kids who have soccer games. She has a very busy schedule, but for this bill she missed bedtimes due to late-night meetings or conference calls. How many times on a Saturday did I talk to her when she was at some athletic event for one of her kids. I could hear the cheering and the running up and down in the background.

But Stephanie has a unique ability to help build coalitions. When one group or another was upset—and believe me, that probably happened every 5 minutes in this legislation—there was Stephanie, soothing them, calming them but telling them the truth, so they trusted her. She was an indispensable part of our ability to get this done.

Through the rough patches, she never gave up on our team. I know that Kyle, Nora, and Pip are going to be happy to have mommy back, and maybe there will be another ice hockey tournament in Rochester next year when whatever legislation we are working on then rises to the fore. To the great genius—and I started referring to him at our meetings as my immigration genius—and he was. The intellectual force, the creative force who propelled this effort was one Leon Fresco, the son of Cuban immigrants from Miami. I think it was about 5 years ago he took this job. He was a very successful immigration lawyer, but he took this job because he wanted to do immigration reform. He has worked on many other things. His creativity has shown its mark in "Schumerland" on so many different issues, but this was his dream, and he put every atom of his body into this.

Like me, he is voluble. During our staff meetings we would yell at each other, and it became a joke because I once said: Shut up, Leon. So JOHN MCCAIN greeted him at each meeting: Shut up, Leon. And we all loved it. But Leon, your fierce determination, your innate intelligence, your deep love of this country, is great. And thanks to Mama Fresco, Leon's mom, who is so proud of her son. It was great to meet your parents who are immigrants, who are the American dream.

The people I spoke about on the floor a few minutes ago are embodied in the Frescos. How about Sofie, Leon's wife. Sofie got pregnant during all of this, so he wasn't devoting 100 percent of his time to immigration reform, but close to it. And there she was, Sofie, indomitable and quiet, doing the job.

Our legislative team is a great team—and everyone pitched in to do immigration—led by Heather McHugh. Heather's advice and counsel were invaluable. She communicated with our colleagues. Each one of our staff has great attributes. Heather is always wary of me going a little too far, a little too fast, or a little too quick, and